

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A programmable apparatus for displaying a graphical user interface for an information management system comprising:

5 a. means for displaying on a display device, to a plurality of customer service representative workstations, a plurality of point-and-click graphical user interface screens, each screen with a menu of icons for activating a plurality of functions, and each screen presenting data, where:

10 the plurality of functions comprise: sales, finance and insurance, accounting, human resources, payroll, parts, service, customer database, vehicle database, activities and processes, roles, users and departments, security, reports, printing, instant messaging, e-business enablers, supply chain integration, electronic time clock, system configurator, vehicle inspection, Internet service scheduling, electronic mail service reminders, intra-dealer parts inventory, inter-dealer parts inventory, intra-dealer vehicle inventory, inter-dealer vehicle
15 inventory and dealer communication system,

presented data are data comprising: customer data, vehicle data, shop productivity data, loan data, billing system data, employee data, sales data, inventory data, and ordering data, and

20 one display screen contains fields comprising: icons, activity menus, day and time, help function, window sizing, data windows, input buttons, navigation inputs, and database query inputs;

b. means for communicating between the means for displaying and a computer containing a database having stored data to be presented;

c. means for executing the plurality of functions; and

d. means for accessing the data,

wherein the customer service representative workstations are located at one or more automobile dealership sites.

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2. A method using a computer, for displaying a graphical user interface for an information management system, comprising:

a. displaying on a display device, to a plurality of customer service representative workstations, a plurality of point-and-click graphical user interface screens, each screen with a menu of icons for activating a plurality of functions, and each screen presenting data, where:

the plurality of functions comprise: sales, finance and insurance, accounting, human resources, payroll, parts, service, customer database, vehicle database, activities and processes, roles, users and departments, security, reports, printing, instant messaging, e-business enablers, supply chain integration, electronic time clock, system configurator, vehicle inspection, Internet service scheduling, electronic mail service reminders, intra-dealer parts inventory, inter-dealer parts inventory, intra-dealer vehicle inventory, inter-dealer vehicle inventory and dealer communication system,

presented data are data comprising: customer data, vehicle data, shop productivity data, loan data, billing system data, employee data, sales data, inventory data, and ordering data, and

one display screen contains fields comprising: icons, activity menus, day and time, help function, window sizing, data windows, input buttons, navigation inputs, and database query inputs;

b. communicating between the means for displaying and a computer containing a database having stored data to be presented;

c. executing the plurality of functions; and

d. accessing the data,

wherein the customer service representative workstations are located at one or more automobile dealership sites.

3. A machine readable medium containing instructions, which when executed by a computer, cause the computer to execute a method comprising:

a. displaying on a display device, to a plurality of customer service representative workstations, a plurality of point-and-click graphical user interface screens, each screen with a menu of icons for activating a plurality of functions, and each screen presenting data, where:

the plurality of functions comprise: sales, finance and insurance, accounting, human resources, payroll, parts, service, customer database, vehicle database, activities and processes, roles, users and departments, security, reports, printing, instant messaging, e-business enablers, supply chain integration, electronic time clock, system configurator, vehicle inspection, Internet service scheduling, electronic mail service reminders, intra-dealer parts inventory, inter-

dealer parts inventory, intra-dealer vehicle inventory, inter-dealer vehicle inventory and dealer communication system,

presented data are data comprising: customer data, vehicle data, shop productivity data, loan data, billing system data, employee data, sales data, inventory data, and ordering data, and

one display screen contains fields comprising: icons, activity menus, day and time, help function, window sizing, data windows, input buttons, navigation inputs, and database query inputs;

b. communicating between the means for displaying and a computer containing a database having stored data to be presented;

c. executing the plurality of functions; and

d. accessing the data,

wherein the customer service representative workstations are located at one or more automobile dealership sites.

4. A computer system for an information management system, comprising:

a. a plurality of store processors, located at automobile dealership sites;

b. a plurality of workstations located at the automobile dealership sites,

each workstation in electronic communications with a store processor;

c. an operations server, in electronic communication with the plurality of store processors, the operations server having software and databases for an enterprise-wide information management system for automobile dealerships; and

d. the plurality of workstations enabling access to the enterprise-wide information management system of the operations server.

5. A computer system as in claim 4, wherein the information management system includes;

a. means for displaying on a display device, to a plurality of customer service representative workstations, a plurality of point-and-click graphical user interface screens, each screen with a menu of icons for activating a plurality of functions, and each screen presenting data, where:

the plurality of functions comprise: sales, finance and insurance, accounting, human resources, payroll, parts, service, customer database, vehicle database, activities and processes, roles, users and departments, security, reports, printing, instant messaging, e-business enablers, supply chain integration, electronic time clock, system configurator, vehicle inspection, Internet service scheduling, electronic mail service reminders, intra-dealer parts inventory, inter-dealer parts inventory, intra-dealer vehicle inventory, inter-dealer vehicle inventory and dealer communication system,

presented data is data comprising: customer data, vehicle data, shop productivity data, loan data, billing system data, employee data, sales data, inventory data, and ordering data, and

one display screen contains fields comprising: icons, activity menus, day and time, help function, window sizing, data windows, input buttons, navigation inputs, and database query inputs;

b. means for communicating between the means for displaying and a computer containing a database having stored data to be presented;

c. means for executing the plurality of functions; and

d. means for accessing the data.

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6. A programmable apparatus to generate a graphical user interface, the graphical user interface comprising:

a branding region;

a task bar;

a content region; and

a context region,

wherein, for a plurality of different applications, a location and size of each region and the task bar remains substantially constant, despite changes in content displayed in each region.

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7. An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein the graphical user interface further comprises:

a user identification portion;

a list button region;

a user assistance region;

relationship buttons; and

action buttons,

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wherein for the plurality of different applications, a location and size of the list button region, the user identification portion, the user assistance region, the relationship buttons, and the action buttons remain substantially constant, despite changes in content displayed in each region.

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8. An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein:

the branding region displays indicia selected from the group consisting of: automobile manufacturer names, automobile dealership names, automobile service provider names and combinations thereof;

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the context region displays information selected from the group consisting of: customer identifying information, automobile identifying information, automobile service order information, and combinations thereof;

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the content region displays information relating to functions selected from the group consisting of: sales, finance and insurance, accounting, human resources, payroll, parts, service, customer database, vehicle database, activities and processes, roles, users and departments, security, reports, printing, instant messaging, e-business enablers, supply chain integration, electronic time clock, system configurator, vehicle inspection, Internet service scheduling, electronic mail service reminders, intra-dealer parts inventory, inter-dealer parts inventory, intra-dealer vehicle inventory, inter-dealer vehicle inventory, dealer communication system and combinations thereof; and

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the content region further displays data selected from the group consisting of: customer data, vehicle data, shop productivity data, loan data, billing system

data, employee data, sales data, inventory data, ordering data, and combinations thereof.

9. An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein the content region further comprises:

5 information pertaining to an automobile repair order, wherein the information pertaining to an automobile repair order is selected from the group consisting of: contact person for the automobile, contact information for the contact person, priority of the service, date of promised completion of the repair, time of promised completion of the repair, total shop capacity, allocated shop capacity, available shop capacity, and time to complete the ordered repair.

10. A method of generating a graphical user interface in a display device, comprising:

generating a branding region comprising a portion of a graphical user interface displayed on a display device;

generating a task bar comprising a portion of the graphical user interface;

generating a content region comprising a portion of the graphical user interface; and

generating a context region comprising a portion of the graphical user interface,

20 wherein, for a plurality of different applications, a location and size of each region and the task bar remains substantially constant, despite changes in content displayed in each region.

11. A method as in claim 10, further comprising:

generating a user identification portion comprising a portion of the graphical user interface;

5 generating a list button region comprising a portion of the graphical user interface;

generating a user assistance region comprising a portion of the graphical user interface;

generating relationship buttons comprising a portion of the graphical user interface; and

10 generating action buttons comprising portions of the graphical user interface,

wherein for the plurality of different applications, a location and size of the list button region, the user identification portion, the user assistance region, the relationship buttons, and the action buttons remain substantially constant, despite changes in content displayed in each region.

12. A method as in claim 10, further comprising:

20 displaying within the branding region indicia selected from the group consisting of: automobile manufacturer names, automobile dealership names, automobile service provider names and combinations thereof;

displaying within the context region information selected from the group consisting of: customer identifying information, automobile identifying information, automobile service order information, and combinations thereof;

5 displaying within the content region information relating to functions selected from the group consisting of: sales, finance and insurance, accounting, human resources, payroll, parts, service, customer database, vehicle database, activities and processes, roles, users and departments, security, reports, printing, instant messaging, e-business enablers, supply chain integration, electronic time clock, system configurator, vehicle inspection, Internet service scheduling, electronic mail service reminders, intra-dealer parts inventory, inter-dealer parts inventory, intra-dealer vehicle inventory, inter-dealer vehicle inventory, dealer communication system and combinations thereof; and

10 displaying within the content region data selected from the group consisting of: customer data, vehicle data, shop productivity data, loan data, billing system data, employee data, sales data, inventory data, ordering data, and combinations thereof.

15 13. A method as in claim 10, wherein the content region further comprises:

20 information pertaining to an automobile repair order, wherein the information pertaining to an automobile repair order is selected from the group consisting of: contact person for the automobile, contact information for the contact person, priority of the service, date of promised completion of the repair,

time of promised completion of the repair, total shop capacity, allocated shop capacity, available shop capacity, and time to complete the ordered repair.

14. A machine readable medium containing instructions, which when
5 executed by a computer cause the computer to execute a method comprising:

generating a branding region comprising a portion of a graphical user
interface on a display device;

generating a task bar comprising a portion of the graphical user interface;

generating a content region comprising a portion of the graphical user
10 interface; and

generating a context region comprising a portion of the graphical user
interface,

wherein, for a plurality of different applications, a location and size of
each region and the task bar remains substantially constant, despite changes in
15 content displayed in each region.

15. A machine readable medium as in claim 14, the method further
comprising:

generating a user identification portion comprising a portion of the
20 graphical user interface;

generating a list button region comprising a portion of the graphical user
interface;

generating a user assistance region comprising a portion of the graphical user interface;

generating relationship buttons comprising a portion of the graphical user interface; and

5 generating action buttons comprising portions of the graphical user interface,

wherein for the plurality of different applications, a location and size of the list button region, the user identification portion, the user assistance region, the relationship buttons, and the action buttons remain substantially constant, despite changes in content displayed in each region.

10 16. A machine readable medium as in claim 14, the method further comprising:

15 displaying within the branding region indicia selected from the group consisting of: automobile manufacturer names, automobile dealership names, automobile service provider names and combinations thereof;

displaying within the context region information selected from the group consisting of: customer identifying information, automobile identifying information, automobile service order information, and combinations thereof;

20 displaying within the content region information relating to functions selected from the group consisting of: sales, finance and insurance, accounting, human resources, payroll, parts, service, customer database, vehicle database, activities and processes, roles, users and departments, security, reports, printing,

instant messaging, e-business enablers, supply chain integration, electronic time clock, system configurator, vehicle inspection, Internet service scheduling, electronic mail service reminders, intra-dealer parts inventory, inter-dealer parts inventory, intra-dealer vehicle inventory, inter-dealer vehicle inventory, dealer communication system and combinations thereof; and

displaying within the content region data selected from the group consisting of: customer data, vehicle data, shop productivity data, loan data, billing system data, employee data, sales data, inventory data, ordering data, and combinations thereof.

17. A machine readable medium as in claim 14, wherein the content region further comprises:

information pertaining to an automobile repair order, wherein the information pertaining to an automobile repair order is selected from the group consisting of: contact person for the automobile, contact information for the contact person, priority of the service, date of promised completion of the repair, time of promised completion of the repair, total shop capacity, allocated shop capacity, available shop capacity, and time to complete the ordered repair.

18. A programmable apparatus to display a graphical user interface, the graphical user interface comprising:

a. means to generate a graphical user interface with a plurality of display regions, using a programmable apparatus,

b. means to display the plurality of display regions on a display device,

c. each display region corresponding to an automobile lease term;

d. each display region being further divided into sub-regions, the sub-regions displaying information pertaining to available lease programs, the information selected from the group consisting of: lessor identification, money factor, residual percentage, residual amount, back end gross, total deal gross, initial payment, amount due on delivery, the lease term, and the monthly payment.

19. An apparatus as in claim 18, further comprising:

means to accept input requesting a sort of the information displayed;

means to sort the information displayed in response to the input; and

means to display the sorted information.

20. A method of displaying a graphical user interface on a display device, comprising:

a. generating a graphical user interface with a plurality of display regions, using a programmable apparatus,

b. displaying the plurality of display regions on a display device,

c. each display region corresponding to an automobile lease term;

d. each display region being further divided into sub-regions, the sub-regions displaying information pertaining to available lease programs, the information selected from the group consisting of: lessor identification, money

factor, residual percentage, residual amount, back end gross, total deal gross, initial payment, amount due on delivery, the lease term, and the monthly payment.

21. A method as in claim 20, further comprising:

- a. accepting input requesting a sort of the information displayed;
- b. sorting the information displayed in response to the input; and
- c. displaying the sorted information.

22. A machine readable medium containing instructions which when executed by a programmable apparatus causes the apparatus to execute a method comprising:

- a. generating a graphical interface with a plurality of display regions, using a programmable apparatus,
- b. displaying the plurality of display regions on a display device,
- c. each display region corresponding to an automobile lease term;
- d. each display region being further divided into sub-regions, the sub-regions displaying information pertaining to available lease programs, the information selected from the group consisting of: lessor identification, money factor, residual percentage, residual amount, back end gross, total deal gross, initial payment, amount due on delivery, the lease term, and the monthly payment.

23. A machine readable medium as in claim 22, the method further comprising:

- a. accepting input requesting a sort of the information displayed;
- b. sorting the information displayed in response to the input; and
- c. displaying the sorted information.

5 24. A method executed by a programmable apparatus, comprising:

 a. collecting with a programmable apparatus, for an individual automobile
service person, the total time that the person was at a job site during a period,

 b. collecting and aggregating from an automobile service transaction
records database, the time allocated to each automobile service job for that
10 person,

 c. comparing the total time allocated for that person for all service jobs to
the total time that person was at the job site, to develop a productivity analysis for
that person for that period, and

 d. outputting the productivity analysis,

 where the job site is an automobile service location of an automobile
15 dealership.

25. A machine readable medium containing instructions which when executed
by a programmable apparatus causes the apparatus to execute a method
20 comprising:

 a. collecting with a programmable apparatus, for an individual automobile
service person, the total time that the person was at a job site during a period,

b. collecting and aggregating from an automobile service transaction records database, the time allocated to each automobile service job for that person,

c. comparing the total time allocated for that person for all service jobs to the total time that person was at the job site, to develop a productivity analysis for that person for that period, and

d. outputting the productivity analysis,

where the job site is an automobile service location of an automobile dealership.

26. A programmable apparatus comprising:

a. means to collect, for an individual automobile service person, the total time that the person was at a job site during a period,

b. means to collect and aggregate from an automobile service transaction records database, the time allocated to each automobile service job for that person,

c. means to compare the total time allocated for that person for all service jobs to the total time that person was at the job site, to develop a productivity analysis for that person for that period, and

d. means to output the productivity apparatus,

where the job site is an automobile service location of an automobile dealership.